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the SOURCE

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TRAINING REQUIRED BY FEDS

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NIMS (National Incident Management System) establishes standardized incident management processes, protocols, and procedures that all responders -- federal, state, tribal, and local -- will use to coordinate and conduct response actions. With responders using the same standardized procedures, they will all share a common focus, and will be able to place full emphasis on incident management when a homeland security incident occurs -- whether terrorism or natural disaster. In addition, national preparedness and readiness in responding to and recovering from an incident is enhanced since all of the nation's emergency teams and authorities are using a common language and set of procedures.

That's the official answer, but why does law enforcement need it? There are many reasons given to justify the government's need for this type of program. Most of them sound inflated and grandiose as many political programs do. But if you peel away all the bureaucratic layers, you can see that the principles are sound and can be adapted to fit any agency's needs. Cooperation with outside agencies during a critical incident is most always non-existent, so any program that can put us all on the same footing should be considered.

NIMS incorporates incident management's best practices developed and proven by thousands of responders and authorities across America. These practices, coupled with consistency and national standardization, will now be carried forward throughout all incident management processes: exercises, qualification and certification, communications interoperability, doctrinal changes, training, publications, public affairs, equipping, evaluating, and incident management. All of these measures unify the response community as never before.

The OSBI has made major strides in the past year to become proficient in the implementation of the NIMS procedures. We are one of the most current among all state agencies in the certification of our employees. Most, if not all, commissioned employees have been trained and certified in four separate blocks of federal training for first responders. Also, our command staff, from first line supervisors through the director, has been certified as command or general staff in an Incident Command

NIMS continued...

System (ICS) organization, with multi-agency coordination system responsibilities, and multi-agency coordination system/emergency operations center managers. Certification includes six blocks of training including a week of classroom participation.

Key features of NIMS

- **Incident Command System (ICS).** NIMS establishes ICS as a standard incident management organization with five functional areas -- command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/ administration -- for management of all major incidents. To ensure further coordination, and during incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies, the principle of unified command has been universally incorporated into NIMS. This unified command not only coordinates the efforts of many jurisdictions, but provides for and assures joint decisions on objectives, strategies, plans, priorities, and public communications.

- **Communications and Information Management.** Standardized communications during an incident are essential. NIMS prescribes interoperable communications systems for both incident and information management. Responders and managers across all agencies and jurisdictions must have a common operating picture for a more efficient and effective incident response.

- **Preparedness.** Preparedness incorporates a range of measures, actions, and processes accomplished before an incident happens. NIMS preparedness measures planning, training, exercises, qualification and certification, equipment acquisition and certification, and publication management. All of these serve to ensure that pre-incident actions are standardized and consistent with mutually-agreed doctrine. NIMS further places emphasis on mitigation activities to enhance preparedness. Mitigation includes public education and outreach, structural modifications to lessen the loss of life or destruction of property, code enforcement in support of zoning rules, land management and building codes, and flood insurance and property buy-out for frequently flooded areas.

- **Joint Information System (JIS).** NIMS organizational measures enhance the public communication effort. The Joint Information System provides the public with timely and accurate incident information and unified public messages. This system employs Joint Information Centers (JIC) and brings incident communicators together during an incident to develop, coordinate, and deliver a unified message. This will ensure that federal, state, and local levels of government are releasing the same information during an incident.

NIMS Integration Center (NIC). To ensure that NIMS remains an accurate and effective management tool, the NIMS NIC will be established by the Secretary of Homeland Security to assess proposed changes to NIMS, capture, and evaluate lessons learned, and employ best practices. The NIC will provide strategic direction and oversight of NIMS, supporting both routine maintenance and continuous refinement of the system and its components over the long term. The NIC will develop and facilitate national standards for NIMS education and training, first responder communications and equipment, typing of resources, qualification and credentialing of incident management and responder personnel, and standardization of equipment maintenance and resources. The NIC will continue to use the collaborative process of federal, state, tribal, local, multi-discipline and private authorities to assess prospective changes and assure continuity and accuracy.

The federal government has astronomical amounts of money allocated to this program. To be eligible for those funds, agencies must be certified and proficient in all areas of the NIMS concepts.

OSBI Hosts Legislative Academy

In a continuing effort to inform lawmakers on how OSBI works, the bureau is offering a legislative academy. The classes will be held every Tuesday evening starting February 12. During this time, lawmakers will get an inside look at homicide investigations, undercover surveillance, and evidence collections, for example.

"This will give legislators, especially those who have no law enforcement experience, an idea of the everyday challenges for agents and criminalists while they work to keep this state safe," Jessica Brown, OSBI Public Information Officer, says.

Attendees will get their hands dirty several nights learning how to lift fingerprints, collect blood evidence and search for other bodily fluids with special tools. They'll hear from victims of violent crime, and see just how easily and quickly predators find children on the Internet and how OSBI is combating that growing plague on society.

OSBI firearms instructors will teach the lawmakers how to properly use guns and how to make a split second decision on when to fire their weapons – again, putting these individuals as close to the front lines of law enforcement as possible.

OSBI hopes this first-ever legislative academy gives lawmakers the information they need to cast the right vote for their constituents.

Marihuana Field Testing Program Is Great Success

The OSBI implemented a plan in February 1999 to reduce misdemeanor marihuana analysis by the OSBI laboratory so that analysts could devote time and resources to felony cases. Field test kits for marihuana are supplied to agencies to allow officers to field test misdemeanor marihuana cases. If a case is scheduled for trial, the evidence is turned over to the OSBI lab for analysis and generation of a report. Otherwise, the evidence is not submitted to the OSBI. The OSBI continues to enroll new agencies and supply kits to previously enrolled agencies.

The Marihuana Field Testing Program has reduced the number of misdemeanor marihuana cases analyzed by the OSBI Forensic Laboratory. Experience indicates nearly all such cases are pled out and never go to trial. This change in operations has allowed OSBI Drug Chemists more time to work serious felony drug cases involving trafficking and manufacturing. Felony drug cases are analyzed quicker and the results are made available to officers and prosecutors on a more timely basis. For example, the average turn around time on a drug case in the OSBI lab has been reduced to 9 days.

This program greatly benefits the OSBI, law enforcement, and prosecutors in Oklahoma. Oklahoma law enforcement agencies use marihuana field-testing kits for misdemeanor marihuana possession cases in lieu of full forensic laboratory analysis. There are no costs to the participating agencies. The OSBI provides information about the program, a free training video, free marihuana field test kits, material safety data sheets, and marihuana field test report forms to any law enforcement agency in Oklahoma who agrees to participate in this program. The participating agencies simply agree not to submit simple possession marihuana cases to the OSBI Laboratory unless it has a pending court date and agree to maintain custody of the marihuana evidence until it is no longer needed for prosecution of the case.

To enroll or request more kits call OSBI, 405-425-3804 or email donnas@osbi.state.ok.us for Donna Sneed.

The Move Is On

New Lab Nearly Ready For Business

OSBI will move into the new Forensic Science Center in Edmond by the end of March.

In 2001, the vision of a new facility to house forensic science for the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation became more than a dream with the implementation of funding from the Oklahoma Legislature for forensic science improvement. During the last seven years, the vision was developed and now is near completion. The Forensic Science Center located on 2nd Street across from the University of Central Oklahoma is nearly complete. The new building has 70,000 square feet of usable space, which will meet the needs of the law enforcement community for years to come.

One of the challenges associated with the Forensic Science Center is how to get all of the instrumentation and evidence transferred from one location to another without substantial interruption of services. Some units have little instrumentation and shouldn't miss a beat, but other items require specified movers or actions before they can be transported.

After visiting with other agencies and their approaches to moving, OSBI has developed a plan for our transition. We will move in phases during weekends. Several units, such as the drug lab, can shut down instruments on a Friday, have them relocated, and be back to work Monday. In an effort to make that process as smooth as possible, an instrument is already on site in Edmond to make sure all connections are correct and gases are working properly in each instrument. Some units, such as forensic biology, will have a factory representative come in to break down the genetic analyzers and then come back once the instruments are moved to do start-up procedures.

The move should take two or three weeks, and each unit will be up and running early in the week after they move. Information concerning the submission of evidence to the Forensic Science Center will be sent to all agencies via NCIC and other methods once an official date is determined.